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EDITORIAL NOTES

Some seven or eight years ago Dr. Hermann Lietz, a German schoolmaster of fine insight, leased eighty acres of ground in the beautiful Isle-Thal near the Harz Mountains, for the purpose of founding a school. The only building on the premises, he told me, was an old powder-mill with but one door and no windows. Upon this he began work with a very small number of pupils, refitting it to meet the needs of a school and a home—for he called it “The German Country Educational Home.” It was here that the boys were to live and learn.

**Building a
School**

While the work on the building was progressing, a patron mother visiting the place was much concerned with the fact that she should have to pay a large tuition in an institution which the boy himself had to assist in building. She therefore asked Mr. Lietz to make a reduction in the fee. “More, Madam, more,” he replied. “I should charge you more rather than less; for after the work of construction is completed, the educational advantages of the place will be greatly reduced.”

There can be no question as to the soundness of the German schoolmaster’s answer. A pupil can get from a school only the natural profit that accrues from an actual investment of self—not a whit more.

The attitude of Dr. Lietz’s patron toward the manual work required in his school is very common. Parents, generally, are ready to attribute their own success in life to some form of labor which circumstances made necessary; but, curiously enough, they are usually anxious to shield their children from similar sturdy influences. They desire their children to have a smoother road than the one which they traveled themselves. Praiseworthy as this may appear, it ordinarily takes away from the children the most valuable opportunities for self-development. Mother-love is both natural and beautiful; but in the proper nurture of childhood it requires that judicious admixture of intelligence with instinct which will lift it well above the mere cub-licking impulses found in the fox and in the bear.

**Education and
Manual Labor**

**Ignorant
Mother-Love**

In a school, properly organized, there are as many duties to be done "around the house" as there are for the children to perform in a well-regulated home. There is no **Home Duties in School** *natural* division, in kind, between the work of the janitor and much of that which the pupils should do, if the highest efficiency of the school is to be secured. Circumstances make it advisable to assign certain duties to the former; but the latter should participate in all that pertains to sanitary conditions, cleanliness, and arrangement and care of the school's property. To this end the girls should be provided with large aprons and the boys with overalls, that they may meet these duties with dispatch and without the necessity of soiling their clothes. Every part of the building and grounds should be in charge of a group of pupils who are responsible for its condition, and there should be definitely appointed times when all such matters should receive attention. The development of a right disposition toward these homely duties is at the root of a true social organization, because they are all so intimately related to the welfare of the whole.

Objections to this kind of regimen for school children are based upon various grounds. Some people look upon manual labor as degrading. Their ideas concerning it are still tangled up with certain conceptions of that **Objection to Manual Labor** serfdom which once put the badge of the menial upon everyone who worked with his hands. It sometimes happens, for example, that these people file objections to cooking in the school on the ground that they do not wish to have their children trained for service in the kitchen! Since they themselves are in a more or less backward stage of social emergence, these objectors naturally regard such employment in the school as drags on their aspirations.

Other parents profess a strong belief in manual labor—"manual training" would perhaps be better—but they object to their children doing the work which traditionally belongs to the janitor. They believe that the tuition which they pay, or in the case of the public school the taxes, should go for hired service as far as it may be necessary

**School
Janitoring**

to relieve the pupils of all the burdens imposed by good house-keeping.

There is still another class of objectors who are deeply imbued with the idea that the school is a knowledge-shop where for coin of the realm intellectual commodities may be obtained in snug packages from the teachers. Some of these people are still in that rudimentary stage of intelligence which cannot grasp the significance of purposeful occupations in the training of children. Others, however, have their attention glued upon certain college-entrance requirements which so far have failed to give recognition in any tangible form to the manual labor required of young people either at home or at school. They look down upon the performance of all work not down in the "Requirements" as a waste of time.

There is still another group of people, too, who are mildly astonished that the "new education" should smack of anything like work which might prove disagreeable at times to children. They are accustomed to regard the modern school as a frictionless toboggan into the fields of knowledge; as an organized means for systematically training people in the art of dodging the distasteful and difficult things of this life. Hence their inability to reconcile their ideas of education with anything that makes a demand for physical labor. These people are merely doing their share toward perpetuating the oldest and the crudest misconception as to the conditions necessary to genuine growth. The type of character the world most needs has for its corner-stone earnest personal effort on behalf of self for the good of the whole. Any other course leads him who purses it thru general uselessness straight toward imbecility, adipose, and apoplexy.

It is needless, however, to multiply words in the consideration of these objections and others that may be urged; for, at last, they must all be brought to the bar of a single principle. The end of education is character, and the intrinsic fineness of character bears a direct relation to service. It is unthinkable that a fine character may be built up

**School Not a
Knowledge
Shop**

**School Not a
Toboggan**

**A Deep-lying
Principle**

by any means whatsoever in anyone who is not continually expending himself to the utmost in service. The school is a recognized means for character-building in childhood and youth, and it follows that *it should exist for the sole purpose of offering the children adequate opportunity for transmuting that service which they can bring to it into the character which they can take away.* It is as inexorable as gravitation that, if no service is rendered, no qualities of character are acquired. Here, again, is where the oft-attempted parallelism between education and merchandizing breaks down.

**Character,
Thru Service**

Tuition and taxes are not sums of money paid for something that can be weighed out over the counter. They should be regarded as *fees paid for the privilege of participating in the opportunities for actual service which the school offers the children.* As a means of service the school stands intermediately between the service required in the home and the more extended and complicated service demanded by society at large. It is service, service everywhere—from the kindergarten to the grave—that nature extorts as the fixed price of life from everyone who has emerged from the blindness of the “ape and tiger” stage of existence.

It is happy for the school-teacher that children instinctively respond to the general demands for service. Were this not so,

**Children Love
Service**

education would not be possible—at least what we now believe it to be, could not be true. Since schools began on this earth, children in various but feeble ways have shown a devotion to their institution that has been very little appreciated. The carving of a cross or other symbol on his desk, or the scratching of his name on a window-

**Rudimentary
Service**

pane, is the child's rudimentary thru abortive method of expressing an affection for the school that might easily be fanned into the flame of worthy service. What anyone actually lives with, into that he must and will in some way put himself. The soft pine wood of the desks and the smooth glass of the windows were the extent of his opportunities for impressing himself in the schools of the past.

In one of the rooms at Eton they have not “cleaned house”

for some centuries, I was told, for fear they might rub from the walls the names of some of its earlier students who in their later years have made England famous.

**House-cleaning
at Eton**

Probably no boy ever scrawled his name on a schoolhouse wall without at least a vague hope that some day he might make that name illustrious; that in due time in some way he might make it a beacon for those who were to come after him. The men of England performed a distinct service to English life and education by merely scratching their names on Eton's walls. The luster of those names alone renders dear to the hearts of young Englishmen a musty and gloomy old room which to an American schoolboy, unacquainted with its traditions, would be but a place of durance vile. These

**Subtle In-
stincts Not
Insignificant**

instincts of childhood which hitherto have been allowed to express themselves only in punishable offenses are the most subtle as well as the most vital sources of character. When teachers and parents become wise enough to recognize them properly, these early impulses, directed into channels of service for the school, will then become the root of a true social organization. As their lives gradually become absorbed in its service the pupils will naturally forego the more primitive pleasure of merely defacing the walls of the school.

The kinds of service that are possible to the school are not all indistinguishable from those usually assigned to the janitor.

**Beautifying
Schools**

Besides those which relate to sanitation and order, it is most important that the pupils should actively participate in every effort made to render the house and premises more beautiful. The schoolhouses and grounds in this country, as a rule, are notoriously unattractive. Money could hardly hire parents, no matter what the intellectual feast might be, to sit day after day amid surroundings as barren as those found in the average school. Yet they consign their children for a series of years to such conditions, and by force and cajolery endeavor to make them like it. This, too, in the face of the fact that as a depraver of the æsthetic sense and as a corruptor of public taste there is nothing to beat the average American school-house!

Everyone of them, however, might be redeemed and be made

attractive, if the children themselves were free to work on the problem. The instinct which impels a little girl to trim and decorate an old store-box for her play-house, if allowed its legitimate exercise in the school-room, would soon transform it, too, into something at least childishly beautiful. With children's well-known fondness for trees, shrubs, vines, and flowers, it is simply monstrous that school-yards should remain as unplanted as Sahara. This arid school environment of the young is chargeable directly and only to the colossal ignorance of both teachers and parents as to what constitute the essentials in character-building.

The compass of school life includes years of fine feelings, high aspirations, and great physical vigor. It is a period that should be marked by considerable actual achievement. In the home this is frequently recognized, and the demand is made for helpful service in some form which the child can understand. If a bed which he should make up is left unmade, that is a fact that stands out for itself. The disorder and the discomfort which he inflicts upon the family place him at once in the focus of their attention, perhaps displeasure; and as this is repeated he gradually acquires a just measure of his worth to his social unit, the household. But in school, if he fails to recite well, it is very rarely that he charges it up to his own unworthiness. It is, indeed, difficult to prove that he should do so. It is not easy for him to see how anyone, even himself, is either benefited or injured by the character of his recitation. The teacher's measure of his worth is expressed thru a rat-tan or a mark or a frown or a smile. The inevitable outcome of this state of uncertainty is indifference, distaste, and hatred of the whole scheme of learning as set up by the schools—hence the truant officer and the juvenile court!

The relationship of service to knowledge is palpable. The loftiest service requires the highest skill and the most learning. Accomplishment means exactness of knowledge when both doing and learning are controlled by motives pointing to useful service.

Schools, therefore, should be regarded as workshops. They

**Give the Pupils
a Chance**

**Potentiality of
the School
Period**

**Criteria
in School
and Home**

**Service and
Knowledge**

should be equipped with simple means for pursuing some phase of every craft that bears upon human welfare. One cannot overestimate the boon that such arts and crafts as clay-modeling, pottery, woodwork, textiles, metal-work, book-binding, printing, drawing, and painting are to children whose artistic tastes are stimulated and whose efforts are booted and spurred by a worthy purpose. By these means our schools some day will be made beautiful thru the work of the childrens' hands, and their lives will be made fair thru their consecration to the school's service.

W. S. J.